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SACRAMENTO WOMAN SENTENCED FOR FRAUDULENT RECEIPT OF HURRICANE KATRINA DISASTER MONEY

SACRAMENTO--United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced today that TONYA V. MEREDITH, 21, of Sacramento, was sentenced today by United States District Judge William B. Shubb to 60 months of federal probation.

In September 2005, Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales created the Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force, designed to deter, investigate, and prosecute disaster-related federal crimes such as charity fraud, identity theft, procurement fraud, and insurance fraud. The Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force-chaired by Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of the Criminal Division-includes the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the United States Inspectors General community, the United States Secret Service, the United States Postal Inspection Service, the Executive Office for United States Attorneys, and others.

This case was investigated by the Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General, and the United States Postal Inspection Service.

MEREDITH was indicted by a federal grand jury on November 9, 2006. According to Assistant United States Attorney Michelle Rodriguez, who prosecuted the case, on December 20, 2006, MEREDITH plead guilty to stealing money earmarked for Hurricane Katrina disaster victims (a felony in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 641), making false claims to a United States agency (a felony in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 287), and making a false statement to obtain Hurricane Katrina emergency housing relief (a felony in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1001). MEREDITH stole over \$6,112.30 of funds allocated for disaster relief victims. She fraudulently obtained financial housing assistance intended for needy victims of Hurricane Katrina and signed false documents certifying false information to FEMA, (the Federal Emergency Management Agency). At the time of Hurricane Katrina, MEREDITH was a lifelong California resident receiving welfare assistance from the state of California. MEREDITH admitted that she falsified a New Orleans residence address in order to qualify for additional aid.

While on 60 months federal probation, MEREDITH will be required to pay full restitution for her theft. In addition, MEREDITH has been ordered to pay a \$300 special penalty assessment.

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